



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 5, 2012

Mr. Nathan L. Brown
Assistant City Attorney
City of El Paso
2 Civic Center Plaza, 9th Floor
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2012-15968

Dear Mr. Brown:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 467152.

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified police report. You state you have released some of the requested information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information contains a certificate of magistrate that was signed by a magistrate. Section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code requires disclosure of "information that is also contained in a public court record," unless the information is expressly confidential under the Act or other law. Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). Although you seek to withhold this information under section 552.108, that section is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects only the governmental body's interests and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See id.* § 552.007; Open Record Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). Therefore, the certificate of magistrate we have marked may not be withheld under section 552.108 of the Government Code. As

you raise no further exception against the disclosure of this information, the department must release it pursuant to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state, and provide documentation from an Assistant District Attorney for the 34th Judicial District of Texas affirming, the requested police report relates to a pending criminal investigation and prosecution. Based upon these representations, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable and the release of the remaining information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88. We note basic information includes a detailed description of the offense, but does not include motor vehicle information encompassed by section 552.130 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, you may withhold the remaining information from disclosure based on section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.¹

In summary, the marked certificate of magistrate must be released pursuant to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. Except for basic information which must be released, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kathryn R. Mattingly".

Kathryn R. Mattingly
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KRM/bhf

Ref: ID# 467152

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)